

Reflection on Integrating Technology in the Self-Contained Classroom- Mar. 2011 & Apr. 2011

The two self-contained classrooms on my campus are life-skills classes that my district refers to as SUCCESS. The SUCCESS classes consist of students that range in grade level from kindergarten to fourth grade and range in ability level from infant to beginning readers. There are many different levels of communication skills between the students. Some can communicate verbally, some rely on gestures, and others rely on picture communication. I met with the SUCCESS teachers on my campus to discuss the students' needs regarding communication and how technology can and should be used to facilitate communication.

This training consisted one initial session when the technology was introduced and modeled and one follow-up session to re-teach and address any concerns. For the initial session, I discussed and modeled the use of the software program Boardmaker (2011) and the communication device Springboard (2010). Boardmaker (2011) is a picture symbol program used for developing communication boards and visual schedules. "Educators are using...Boardmaker to enhance learning and communication for their special needs students" (Boardmaker 6.0, 2011, para. 2). A Springboard is a complex, multi-page digital voice output device for nonverbal students. Prentke Romich Company reports that the Springboard (2010) has the capacity to change and grow along with the capabilities of its users. This is extremely useful for students who are expected to meet individual goals and make steady progress throughout the school year. While meeting with the teachers, I asked them to provide a lesson that they would teach with their students. I used their lesson plan and produced a communication board using Boardmaker and programmed a page into the Springboard addressing the lesson. The lessons, including the communication board and the Springboard, were then taught to the students by the teacher while I assisted the students in using the

technology. The teachers followed my lead when allowing the children a chance to respond using either the communication board or the Springboard. This approach seemed to work well because the teachers were able to follow my lead in allowing the students to respond. Although these students take longer to respond than students that can reply verbally, the teachers remained calm and had the opportunity to observe me showing them how to help the students respond (while providing the verbal input for the message the students were conveying).

This activity as well as having ongoing discussions with the teachers, allowed me to gain a better understanding as to why the teachers were scared of using this technology in the classroom. I was able to model the technology use, which relived some of their fears and increased the likelihood that they will continue to implement the integration of this technology into their lesson planning. The teachers appeared to be excited about using Boardmaker and the Springboard with their students.

In the follow-up session, I found that the teacher required assistance with programming the Springboard and developing new pages. Despite this difficulty, they were still using the Springboard and communication boards on a more regular basis, which was the overall goal.

I enjoyed helping these teachers with the technology available to them and their students. Working with them opened my eyes to the kind of assistance they and other teacher actually need in the classroom. The next time I provide assistance to these teachers, I will be more in tune with their needs and be able to provide even better assistance to them. I would like to find more technology that they can use in the classroom to increase the participation of all the students whether verbal or not.

This activity helped me to meet the standards relating to planning, designing, and modeling effective learning environments and multiple experiences supported by technology; applying and implementing curriculum plans that include methods and strategies for utilizing technology to maximize student learning; applying technology to enhance and improve personal productivity and professional practice; understanding the social, ethical, legal, and human issues surrounding the use of technology in PK-12 schools and assisting teachers in applying that understanding in their practice; and promoting the development and implementation of technology infrastructure, procedures, policies, plans, and budgets for PK-12 schools (Williamson & Redish, 2009).

References

Boardmaker 6.0 (2011). *Mayor-Johnson*. Retrieved from <http://www.mayer-johnson.com/boardmaker-v-6>

SpringBoard Lite. (2010). *Prentke Romich Company*. Retrived from https://store.prentrom.com/product_info.php/cPath/11/products_id/8?osCsid=54u9islgcsc1mibgd8k09agme1

Williamson, J., & Redish, T. (2009). *ISTE's technology facilitation and leadership standards*. Washington, D.C.: International Society for Technology in Education.